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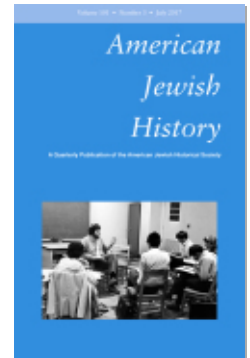
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## Editors' Introduction

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## Editors' Introduction

This issue of *American Jewish History* pays tribute to Jeffrey Gurock, marking forty years since he began teaching at Yeshiva University, his academic home throughout his distinguished career. As a prolific scholar of the American Jewish experience, and a mentor to younger peers, Gurock's impact on the field is substantial, as we shall illustrate in this brief introduction.<sup>1</sup>

Gurock grew up in the Bronx, New York, and attended Manhattan's Ramaz Upper School, a pioneering Modern Orthodox institution that would make its way into the historian's later scholarship. Afterward, he majored in History at City College, and in 1971 began graduate studies at Columbia University. There, he was part of a group of students who honed their scholarly skills during the late 1960s and 1970s in the fields of Urban and Ethnic Studies and History. He would couple with this a focus on topics related to Jewish History. Several of these students—including Gershon Bacon, Gershon Hundert, Paula Hyman, Jenna Weissman Joselit, Deborah Dash Moore, Marsha Rozenblit, and Jack Wertheimer, and, of course, Gurock himself—emerged as leading scholars of Jewish History: focusing primarily on the modern era.

Gurock wrote his doctoral dissertation on Harlem's Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a study that appeared in book form in 1979.<sup>2</sup> Recently, he returned to this topic and published a significantly revised and expanded version. A comparison of the two reveals various clues to the expansion of his repertoire as a social and urban historian, as well as familial and autobiographical reflections that add to those that appear in his previous books.<sup>3</sup> For instance, the new edition describes recent developments in Harlem, including Gurock's own participation, together with his wife Pamela, in the 2012 dedication of the new Torah scroll at the recently-established Harlem center of the Chabad Hasidic movement.<sup>4</sup>

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1. For a complete listing of Gurock's fertile literary production through February 2010, see [http://jeffreygurock.com/bio\\_Gurock.pdf](http://jeffreygurock.com/bio_Gurock.pdf). Only titles that relate directly to the text are cited in the footnotes below.

2. Jeffrey S. Gurock, *When Harlem was Jewish, 1870–1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

3. Gurock, *The Jews of Harlem*, 180–181. In addition, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Judaism's Encounter with American Sports* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 1–8; and *Orthodox Jews in America* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 1–21.

4. Jeffrey S. Gurock, *The Jews of Harlem: The Rise, Decline, and Revival of a Jewish Community* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 11.

Gurock's many contributions to the study of American Jewish Orthodoxy made him a path-breaking scholar of this burgeoning field. In fact, discussions of Orthodox communal life were already present in his original work on Harlem. For example, he described the tensions between the "ultra-Orthodox segment" and those who "argued that a Jewish identity based on old-world values and institutions had little chance of surviving the Americanization process." It was in the early twentieth century, according to Gurock, when "divisions within contemporary Orthodoxy were to a great extent first crystalized."<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, Orthodoxy was not the central theme of his first work. Instead, that area of his research came into fuller focus in the early 1980s. In 1983, Gurock authored a bibliographical guide for students and scholars of American Jewish history, and commented that "much more still remains to be learned" about Orthodox Jews in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Gurock himself moved quickly to fill the gaps he had identified. Within the same year he penned a lengthy article on Orthodox Judaism that focuses primarily on immigrant rabbis and their organizations. There he introduced a fundamental typology that distinguished between "resisters" of Americanization and its "accommodators;" this framework subsequently became a staple of relevant scholarship.<sup>7</sup>

Since then, Gurock has devoted much of his scholarship to the history of Orthodox Judaism in the United States. This resulted in a series of books and numerous articles that have uncovered an endless trove of often unknown and, for the most part, undocumented chapters in the history of American Orthodoxy. Gurock's prime interest has been in tracing and contextualizing the historical reality, although as his career advanced, he dedicated increasingly more space to contemporary developments, as well. His work is based upon massive, rich, and diverse documentation, making use of memoirs, letters, official protocols, and legal documents, and the Jewish and non-Jewish press. He interweaves and utilizes this wide variety of sources with methodological sophistication, and creates extremely thick descriptions of events, personalities, and processes. These set forth the foundation for analyzing developments—both continuity and change—within the various facets of Orthodox Judaism.

The educational-institutional history of American Orthodoxy, for example, has been enriched considerably by Gurock's groundbreaking critical historical overview of Yeshiva University, as well as the edited

5. Gurock, *When Harlem was Jewish*, 112.

6. Jeffrey S. Gurock, *American Jewish History: A Bibliographical Guide* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1983), 62.

7. Jeffrey S. Gurock, "Resisters and Accommodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886–1983," *American Jewish Archives* 35 (November 1983): 100–87.

volume devoted to his alma mater, the Ramaz School. Both presented fresh primary materials that facilitated incisive critical observations regarding the ways in which Orthodoxy perceived and addressed educational challenges in the New World.<sup>8</sup> Gurock also collaborated with Jacob J. Schacter in an examination of the development of the unique and complex perspective of Mordecai M. Kaplan (1881–1983)—the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism—during his formative period as a young Orthodox congregational rabbi, as well as of the reaction to Kaplan of Orthodox rabbis and lay people.<sup>9</sup> For this work, Gurock and Schacter were awarded in 1998 the American Jewish Historical Society's Saul Viener Prize for the “best book written in American Jewish History.”

Gurock also honed in on the many mid-twentieth century Jews who were institutionally allegiant to Orthodoxy, without adhering consistently to a *halakhic* lifestyle. Adopting the seemingly contradictory term “nonobservant Orthodoxy” to describe this group, he argued that its existence explains in part the blurred borders between the Orthodox and Conservative movements during the period in question.<sup>10</sup> This conceptual model is potentially instructive for scholars who examine Jewish Orthodox life in other periods and geographical settings, in which liminality is a core characteristic.

Regional studies represent another significant component of Gurock's oeuvre. In his original work on Harlem Jewry, Gurock already demonstrated the importance of urban and neighborhood geography. This sense of nuance received further expression in his bibliographical guide from 1983. There Gurock lamented that “local and regional communal historiography has also been slow to attract objective, conceptually-oriented scholars to its study.”<sup>11</sup> Gurock listed a few good examples of histories

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8. Jeffrey S. Gurock, *The Men and Women of Yeshiva: Higher Education, Orthodoxy, and American Judaism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); and “The Ramaz Version of American Orthodoxy,” in *Ramaz: School, Community, Scholarship and Orthodoxy*, ed. Jeffrey S. Gurock (Hoboken: Ktav, 1989), 40–82.

9. Jeffrey S. Gurock and Jacob J. Schacter, *A Modern Heretic and a Traditional Community: Mordecai M. Kaplan, Orthodoxy, and American Judaism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

10. Jeffrey S. Gurock, *From Fluidity to Rigidity: The Religious Worlds of Conservative and Orthodox Jews in Twentieth Century America* (Ann Arbor: Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, the University of Michigan, 2008); “Twentieth-Century American Orthodoxy's Era of Non-Observance, 1900–1960,” *Torah u-Madda Journal* 9 (2000): 87–108; “Yeshiva Students at the Jewish Theological Seminary,” in *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary*, vol. I, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1997), 471–514; “The Winnowing of American Orthodoxy” *Approaches to Modern Judaism* I (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 41–54.

11. Gurock, *American Jewish History*, 11.

of Jewish communities in Massachusetts, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. On the whole, he noted, more was required to gain a fuller appreciation of the American Jewish experience. To this end, his publications demonstrate a command of Jewish life both in large centers and smaller concentrations such as Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>12</sup>

Gotham, though, looms the largest for Gurock. A New York native to the core, he was fully aware that a substantial secondary literature did exist regarding his hometown. Yet Gurock did not list these publications in the section of his bibliography on “communal histories.” It would appear that, like so many other historians of American Jewry, for Gurock, New York was not a mere region, but the essential hub of American Jewish life. By the second decade of the twenty-first century, however, he decided to address this theme through a full-length monograph, which highlighted the local urban geographical development of North American Jewry’s largest population center.<sup>13</sup>

Parallel to his concentrations on Orthodoxy and urban Jewish life, the wide-ranging list of topics addressed in Gurock’s publications include: Jews and civil rights, denominational divisions, Jewish-Christian relations, the American rabbinate and synagogue, American Jews and sports, and American Jewish reactions to the Holocaust. In addition to his own highly-productive research output, Gurock also edited or co-edited three collected volumes, as well as a thirteen-volume series of over two hundred of the most influential essays published on American Jewish history during the past four decades.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, throughout his career Gurock assumed a number of leadership roles within the scholarly community. Prominent among these was his long tenure as associate editor of this journal, together with Marc Lee Raphael. He also chaired the academic council of the American Jewish Historical Society. Through these positions he assumed the roles of organizational steward and agent of scholarly change.

We therefore present this festschrift, very aware of the challenge in honoring someone who has probed so many subjects and boasts such an extensive scholarly portfolio. The contributors to this issue represent a cross-section of historians. Some emerged along with Gurock, just as the field was professionalizing, during the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>15</sup>

12. Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston: Brith Sholom Beth Israel and Orthodox Jewish History* (Charleston: College of Charleston Library, 2004).

13. Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Jews in Gotham: New York Jews in a Changing City, 1920–2010* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

14. Jeffrey S. Gurock, ed., *American Jewish History*, 13 Volumes (New York: Routledge, 1997).

15. Jeffrey S. Gurock, “From *Publications* to *American Jewish History*: The Journal of the American Jewish Historical Society and the Writing of American Jewish History,” *American Jewish History* 81 (Winter 1993–1994): 246.

Others are a younger cohort of students and scholars who have benefited from Gurock's research and mentorship to further develop the critical study of American Jewish history. Six of the eight articles included in this special issue focus on American Jewish Orthodoxy and New York Jewry; they reflect upon Gurock's significant contributions to these fields and point to new related directions and topics.

Kimmy Caplan's essay examines the work of Moses Auerbach in creating an independent genre of Orthodox historiography in the United States, within the framework of Leo Jung's "Jewish Library" series. Replaced by a subsequent generation of history writers, Auerbach, argues Caplan, offered a unique perspective on Orthodox Judaism that was innovative in its time and unappreciated afterwards.

David Ellenson's article studies a yet overlooked topic in the writings of the Orthodox thinker and legalist, Rabbi Haim Hirschensohn. In 1918, just one year after the announcement of the Balfour Declaration, Hirschensohn expressed remarkable ideas about the role of religion in responding to political and historical change.

Through their essay on Orthodox Scouting, Adam Ferziger and Hillel Spielman expand our understanding of American Jewish camping. The article fills an important gap, as very little scholarly work has been written on Jewish Boy Scouts, and none until now on Orthodox Boy Scouts. Their work demonstrates how Boy Scout camps bucked the trend toward denominational camping that segregated campers from other Jews who did not share their religious orientation.

In his examination of the sources related to American Jewish involvement in the political unrest in North Africa in the early 1940s and its implications for local Jews, Raphael Medoff demonstrates how one of Gurock's fundamental principles of historical writing yields fresh insight. Medoff proves the importance of reexamining critical sources to explicate the nuances of communal and political decision making.

Deborah Dash Moore's illuminating essay on Irwin Chanin underscores and celebrates Gurock's role in furthering our knowledge of New York Jewry. As Moore indicates, Jews were conscious of their role in changing the shape of both residential communities and the more visible New York skyline in the postwar period.

Pamela Nadell's contribution to *American Jewish History's* ongoing "Signposts" series is another wonderful addition to this special issue. As Nadell acknowledges, Gurock was one of the earliest scholars to pay close attention to gender in his scholarly writings. Accordingly, Nadell's examination of this journal's treatment on American Jewish women is most fitting for this occasion.

The article co-authored by Jonathan Sarna and Zev Eleff on immigrant rabbis mines archival materials to better understand how a spe-

cial exemption in immigration legislation passed in the early twentieth century allowed ordained rabbis from Europe to more easily migrate to the United States. While rabbinic personalities of all stripes took advantage of this policy, Sarna and Eleff make clear that the legislation was particularly important for Orthodox Judaism and the trajectory of its leadership throughout the twentieth century.

Beth Wenger's article is the final installment in this volume. Her work returns us to New York City, a site she uses to investigate how fundraising rhetoric and other areas of Jewish philanthropy helped transform this realm into a male space.

We, the editors, and all of the writers are united in acknowledging the manifold ways that we have learned from Jeffrey Gurock over the past decades and benefited from his guidance and vision for the field of American Jewish History. We are grateful to both Dianne Ashton, the former editor of *AJH*, and to the incoming editorial team, particularly Adam Mendelsohn, for their encouragement and professional involvement throughout the multiple stages of bringing this special issue to publication.

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